



U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Inspector General

# *Investigation Services*

## The Office of Inspector General

The Federal government disburses billions of dollars each year to individuals and local, State, and national entities—so who makes sure that those recipients use Federal dollars as required by law? The answer: the offices of inspectors general—a cadre of Federal employees focused on protecting the integrity of our government and working to detect and prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and criminal activity involving Federal funds. We are the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Department of Education, and we help ensure that America's tax dollars are used effectively and efficiently.

Ours is no small task: the U.S. Department of Education (ED) is one of the largest financial institutions in the country, managing a loan portfolio worth more than \$1.2 trillion. Its program participants and funding recipients include all States and territories, school districts, schools, colleges and universities, other education services providers, and more than 13 million student aid and loan recipients each year. But each year, people steal or intentionally misuse ED funds—Federal student aid, special education money, or Title I funds to school districts with low-income families. They intentionally abuse ED programs, unlawfully access ED computer systems and databases, or use ED funding to support terrorism. It's our job to stop them. And that is what OIG Investigation Services is all about.

## OIG Investigation Services

OIG Investigation Services is the law enforcement arm of ED. This team of professionals is responsible for criminal, civil, and administrative investigative activities relating to ED's programs and operations—from examining allegations of wrongdoing to aggressively pursuing those who seek to enrich themselves at the expense of our nation's students.

Our criminal investigators exercise full law enforcement authority—carrying firearms, executing arrest and search warrants, and taking sworn statements. They also employ the full spectrum of traditional law enforcement techniques, such as conducting surveillance and undercover operations. ED OIG investigators work side-by-side with their colleagues in other law enforcement agencies, as well as with Federal, State, and local prosecutors.

OIG Investigation Services has put a stop to thousands of schemes and scams involving ED programs, operations, and funds. We have unraveled multimillion dollar fraud schemes by high-ranking school officials, unscrupulous school owners, and other people placed in positions of trust to educate our children.



## What the OIG Investigates

ED administers more than 120 programs and most Federal education assistance throughout the country. The OIG examines allegations of wrongdoing and conducts investigations in all of them, including the following.

- Embezzlement, bribery, serious mismanagement, or other public corruption involving ED funds
- Theft or misuse of Federal student aid
- Identity theft
- Fraudulent or other misinformation contained on a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Fraud, waste, or abuse involving a financial aid administrator, other school officials, student loan servicers, or collection agencies
- Schools not complying with regulations or laws involving Federal student aid or other ED programs
- Conflicts of interest
- Contract and procurement irregularities
- Theft or abuse of government property
- Misconduct, abuse of authority, or ethics violations by ED employees or officials
- Other violations of Federal laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to ED programs and funding

In addition, the OIG Technology Crimes Division uses highly specialized techniques and methods such as digital evidence examination and proactive data analytics to investigate criminal activity that targets information technology systems, including the following.

- Unauthorized access or fraudulent misuse of any information technology system used to administer, process, disburse, or manage Federal funds originating from ED
- Theft or misuse of credentials to unlawfully access ED information technology systems, including the National Student Loan Data System and the FAFSA submission Web site
- Identification and referral of cyber vulnerabilities in ED's systems and programs



## Making a Difference

Cases come to ED OIG in a number of ways, including self-initiated investigations based on our audit-related or previous investigative work. We also receive reports from schools, grantees, contractors, other State or Federal law enforcement agencies, ED employees, or Congressional staff—but most importantly, everyday people who know of or suspect wrongdoing involving ED funds or programs. And they provide us information through the OIG Hotline.

The OIG Hotline accepts tips, complaints, and allegations from all sources about possible theft, fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, public corruption, or whistleblower reprisals involving ED programs, operations, or funds. This includes suspected wrongdoing by ED employees, contractors, grantees, schools and school officials, lending institutions, collection agencies, recipients of financial assistance, and people who engage in student aid fraud. If you have knowledge of any wrongdoing involving ED programs, operations, or funds, please contact the OIG Hotline, 24-7:

<https://oighotline.ed.gov>

You may also call toll-free or write to the OIG:

1-800-MISUSED  
(1-800-647-8733)

Inspector General Hotline  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Inspector General  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202

You may make a report anonymously or in confidence.

To learn more, please visit our Web site: [www.ed.gov/oig/investpage.html](http://www.ed.gov/oig/investpage.html)

